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Letter dated 28 August 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I wish to draw your attention to a series of dangerous developments in South Lebanon that pose a serious threat to international peace and security in the region.

Since the Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon, in full compliance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978) and with full respect for the Blue Line as determined by the United Nations, the village of Rajar remained divided, the north being the territory of Lebanon and the south being the territory of Israel.

In order to permit residents of the village to continue with normal daily life, and in accordance with their specific request, Israel agreed to refrain from building a security fence in the area of the Blue Line that cut through the village. This was a purely humanitarian gesture.

The gap between Israel's legitimate need to secure its northern border, and the desire to address the humanitarian needs of the residents of Rajar and avoid dividing the village, has created a complicated dilemma with obvious implications.

Against this background, the Secretary-General's special representative, Terje Larsen, has worked with all the relevant actors in the region in order to preserve the agreed status quo that would prevent people from entering the village from the north. The presence of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) at the Abasiyah checkpoint has maintained this status quo by controlling the northern pathway entering the village.

On 4 August 2001, UNIFIL evacuated their position at the Abasiyah checkpoint. As a result, the path to Rajar is now open to Hizbullah terrorists. The day before, on 3 August 2001, Israel had warned the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the impending danger to the status quo. After the evacuation, upon identifying Hizbullah activity in the area, including the removal of a section of fence north of the village and the beginning of construction of a Hizbullah outpost at the approach to the village, Israel again turned to the United Nations, which is responsible for the maintenance of the status quo and which was instrumental in its establishment, and requested that it act immediately to return the situation to what had existed previously.

Our contacts with the United Nations included conversations between Foreign Minister Peres and the Secretary-General, conversations between our representatives to the United Nations and Assistant Secretary-General Annabi and other relevant

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individuals in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, conversations between representatives of the Israel Defense Forces and their counterparts in UNIFIL, and contact with the Secretary-General's representative to Lebanon, Staffan de Mistura, who visited the area and met with residents of the village.

Israel has made it abundantly clear that it cannot accept a situation in which its border is permeable to acts of terror without being able to take action to prevent them. We call upon the United Nations, as the body responsible for securing the Blue Line and UNIFIL, as the body mandated by resolution 425 (1978) to ensure peace and security in the area, to return and control the Abasiyah checkpoint, to establish a new outpost at the northern approach to the village of Rajar (opposite the outpost built by Hizbullah) and to enable the repair of the northern fence.

We once again request that understandings, achieved in our various contacts with the United Nations, be implemented in the field, namely the presence of UNIFIL at the Abasiyah checkpoint, the undertaking of activity vis-à-vis the Government of Lebanon in order to establish a new UNIFIL outpost, and the creation of conditions appropriate to the fixing of the northern fence.

Circumstances that have arisen pose a clear and present danger to the security of Israeli soldiers and civilians. Israel is obligated to respect the Blue Line as established by the United Nations, but it cannot abrogate its commitment, first and foremost, to the security of its citizens.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yehuda **Lancry**
Permanent Representative